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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [PREF](#) [MOPS](#) [BU](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: MINEMBWE UPDATE: DISCUSSIONS STALLED OVER
INTEGRATION OF BANYAMULENGE DISSIDENTS

REF: KINSHASA 337

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

11. (C) Summary: GDRC negotiations with dissident Banyamulenge commanders in South Kivu have stalled in confusion and disagreement over how their forces are to be integrated into the Congolese military (FARDC). The stalemate has blocked the anticipated disarmament and integration of more than 200 of their troops, who have now reportedly returned to their bases in the High Plateau region of South Kivu. The dissidents claim they agreed to "mixage," while FARDC leadership contends they were promised "brassage." The dispute has triggered a new wave of security fears and some limited population displacement in anticipation of renewed conflict with the dissidents. End summary.

BANYAMULENGE DISSIDENTS ARGUE OVER "MIXAGE"

12. (C) Discussions between dissident Banyamulenge commanders Colonel Venant Bisogo of the so-called "Group of 47" and Major Michel Rukunda of the "Moramvia Group," and South Kivu military and political leaders, broke down March 27 after the dissidents refused to accept the terms of integration for their forces. According to MONUC officials present at the meetings, Bisogo and Rukunda insisted their troops be sent to "mixage." South Kivu Governor Celestin Cibalanza and FARDC Military Region Commander General Sylvain Tshikweje contended they must head for "brassage" instead.

13. (SBU) There are important distinctions between the two modes of military integration. "Mixage," first agreed to as part of a December 2006 ceasefire between renegade General Laurent Nkunda and the GDRC, combined Nkunda loyalists with pro-government troops into new "mixed" brigades in North Kivu. These units, at least in the short-term, will remain in the province. By contrast, the "brassage" process of the DRC's military integration system seeks to remove forces from their normal operational zones in an effort to break up former -- and possibly competing -- chains of command. "Brassage" forces combine several former rebel or government units, receive some common military training, and are deployed to different regions of the country. Nearly all forces integrated to date into the FARDC have gone through "brassage."

14. (C) Unable to reach an agreement on this issue, Bisogo and Rukunda returned their forces, numbering approximately 200, to the Minembwe area. As reported reftel, they had agreed in mid-March to send their forces for integration into the FARDC. The two began sending their troops from the Minembwe

region of South Kivu to the integration site in Luberizi, about 30 miles north of Uvira, March 18. By March 22 approximately 200 troops had assembled in Runingu, about 12 miles north of Uvira. They claimed at the time they were sending their forces for "mixage."

CONFUSION ON WHAT WAS PROMISED

¶5. (C) The problem with the Banyamulenge dissidents stems from confusion over what was promised to them in terms of integration. Negotiations with Bisogo and Rukunda were led by former Nkunda associate Eric Ruhimbere, reportedly with the authorization of FARDC Land Forces Commander General Gabriel Amisi. (Note: Ruhimbere's presence in Bukavu and Minembwe caused widespread concern among the population, as he had participated with Nkunda and Col. Jules Mutebusi in the 2004 attack on Bukavu. It was wrongly feared he was gathering another military force for the same purpose. End note.) What Ruhimbere offered the dissidents remains unknown, but Bisogo and Rukunda contend they agreed only to "mixage," presumably in an attempt to keep their troops in their home province of South Kivu.

¶6. (C) Tshikwej, who did not take part in the original discussions led by Ruhimbere, has categorically refused to let the Banyamulenge dissidents enter "mixage," claiming that was not what was agreed to. At the March 27 meeting with Bisogo and Rukunda, Tshikwej reportedly said he was authorized by President Kabila only to offer them "brassage." MONUC-Uvira political officer Alessandra Trabattoni, who attended the meeting, said Tshikwej, Bisogo and Rukunda later

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called presidential adviser Marcellin Cishambo, who confirmed Kabila's offer.

¶7. (C) After receiving the information from Cishambo, Trabattoni said Bisogo and Rukunda left the meeting and declared they were sending their troops back to Minembwe. They claimed they had to return to the High Plateau to better inform their troops about "brassage," though Trabattoni said she suspects the dissidents are not likely to accept that option. She added that Tshikwej has reportedly appealed to Amisi to intervene in the discussions, but he has so far refused to do so. Additional talks between Tshikwej, Bisogo and Rukunda are tentatively scheduled for March 31 in Runingu.

ADDITIONAL FEARS AND CONCERNS

¶8. (C) Meanwhile, Banyamulenge forces of the FARDC's non-integrated 112th Brigade, formerly commanded by Munyamulenge General Patrick Masunzu, have suspended their deployment towards the Luberizi integration center. MONUC military observers in Minembwe reported March 26 that the 112th, which had been preparing to move to Luberizi for integration, returned to its original positions in Minembwe. Masunzu, who is close to President Kabila and has fought against Bisogo's and Rukunda's forces, left Minembwe for Bukavu in mid-March, and sent a first group of soldiers for integration in mid-February. He later promised to send his remaining 200 troops from the 112th by the end of March (reftel).

¶9. (C) The breakdown in the talks with the Banyamulenge dissidents has triggered renewed fears of violence in the Minembwe region. MONUC military observers reported March 28 that much of the population had fled from the immediate area of Runingu, where the dissidents had been camped since March 22, toward the towns of Kiliba and Uvira further south. Humanitarian officials cannot yet say how many people may have fled.

¶10. (C) Trabattoni told us March 28 concerns have also risen following a reported "ultimatum" from Agathon Rwasa, the leader of Burundi's National Liberation Forces (FNL). Rwasa reportedly demanded the Banyamulenge dissidents immediately depart Runingu and report for "brassage." He claimed the FNL had "sealed" the border to prevent the infiltration of any forces in or out of the DRC. The FNL was alleged to have been implicated in the massacre of Tutsi refugees in Gatumba (Burundi) in August 2004.

COMMENT: STALEMATE RISKS NEW VIOLENCE

¶11. (C) The stalemate has increased tensions in Minembwe and is the likely reason Masunzu's forces stopped their move toward integration. At a critical moment the FARDC appears unwilling or unable to resolve the issue. Leaving the negotiations largely in the hands of an Nkunda ally, who apparently promised conditions that could not be met, was a decidedly bad move made in order to find any possible solution to the situation. The result is now an increasingly likely and protracted standoff with the dissidents who will not be willing to back down from their demands for "mixage," a dangerous and flawed process that in the long term undermines military integration. End comment.
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